

# The 'masterfully erred' TV commercial!

 By [Bonnie Ramaila](#)

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I'm always disturbed when watching a TV commercial and not get the message; this leaves me with a mixed bag of feelings.

During my advertising days, the main objective of advertising a client's product or brand was to communicate the benefits thereof (depending what the brief was), and all the other aspects within that product or brand. These days, our advertising industry is moving away from showing the benefits or communicating what the product or brand is all about, and instead churns out concepts that are absolutely unrelated to the product or the brand or the benefits thereof. I'm not too sure if the creatives just don't get it or the new creativity vacuum cleaners have arrived!

I have been watching this Halls TV commercial for a while, and am struggling to get the message. To me, everything about it is amiss - from the creative idea to media buying.

## Loose wires, where's the connection?

I'm not too sure what the client's brief was to the agency, but judging from the execution, it was not clear either. For the life of me, I cannot fathom the link between "man-made wire cars" and the Halls product, let alone the concept. That's for starters. Apart from an irrelevant storyline, a lost message, a misplaced execution, and a product that's not visible enough in the first few seconds, the commercial is too long and shows unnecessary stages (let alone the irrelevance of the stages to the product!). From the execution, the "wire car" is the main focus, rather than the product Halls itself.

For a non-discerning viewer like my 88-year-old dad (and he is the target market), the three stages of the wire car moving from a miniature to some gaudy monstrosity wire car (okay, I'm exaggerating, but you get the irrelevance) - tells a different story from the product itself. And as for the pay-off line, masterfully erred. I can go on and on listing all that is wrong with the commercial, but the little I have highlighted leaves much to be desired about creative concepts that need to sell the products. Actually, I thought the commercial was a trailer for a new SABC1 programme. Duh, hey!!

## It's all about timing

To put the cherry on top of the already flopped cake, the media planning is just plain bad. Maybe I should not blame the media planning in this instance, but the client. I thought a product like Halls would be best featured and advertised in winter, when the colds, flu and sore throats feast themselves on those individuals with weak immune systems, and a bit during spring as well, when hayfever is at its peak.

I cannot understand what the objective of the commercial is, what message is it conveying or trying to put across, since I

did not see any new packaging or added ingredient that we need to be aware of, or a product for a different course. Maybe I am missing the point, is Halls now giving people a "light-bulb moment?" What's wrong with showing the real benefits of the product in a way that we can relate to or is closer to home? The old Vicks TV commercial that depicted a long queue outside an inyanga's house, giving people flu medicine which happened to be Vicks, was more close to reality than this concept. I'm just saying.

Concepts like these alienate consumers. Consumers want to relate to a product through its execution. Therefore, bring the concept closer to people's daily life and points of references in our society. I have repeatedly mentioned that the beauty about our nation's heterogeneity is that it affords us the opportunity to draw inspiration from our rich and diverse cultures. Why aren't we using it? Okay, forget culture then, how about getting inspiration from reading books that are rich with inspiring prose and impeccable diction, and kind of draws one close to reality than fantasy?

## Where are they?

I often wonder where in the world the new breed of creative minds of our industry come from. In our streetwise language, I'd ask "*eintlik, ba geleze waar Labantu?*" (meaning "*actually, which school of thought are they espousing?*"), because it looks like the education they got was very mediocre.

Can we try to do justice to our creative industry by being just plain creative in the true sense of the word? It's been a while since I have been exposed to a TV commercial that ticks all the boxes (like the PPC TV commercial) and seen a commercial that really epitomises creativity in all respects.

Where are the John Hunt, Mike Schalit, Speech, Festus Masekwameng and Paul Warner's of our industry? What do they say when they see such ads that undermine the work they have put in as predecessors of the new breed in our industry? Can we please have some mentoring at AAA level for these young creatives, before they infest our industry with nonsensical creative concepts that undermine the industry you have worked so hard to build? Let's do something to rescue the situation or else, we'll spend time in court reciting a litany of grievances against some of these concepts!

## ABOUT BONNIE RAMAILA

Bonnie Ramaila is an international communication consultant. She previously worked in the private and public sector as a communication expert. She runs a consultancy that specialises in bespoke communication for niche clients and individuals. Services include communication and media advice, facilitation, publicity and strategy development. She writes in her personal capacity.

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